

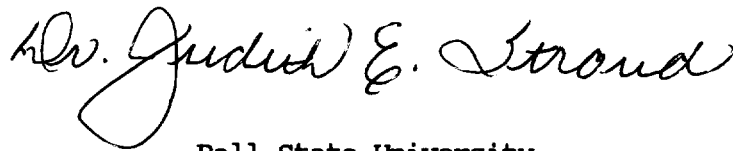
Active Parenting in the Home and at School:  
Implications for Children and Adults

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dr. Judith E. Stroud". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name of the thesis advisor.

Ball State University

Muncie, Indiana

July 1995

December 1995

### Purpose of Thesis

This discussion of parent involvement is divided into two sections. The first is the importance of parents being active in schools, and the second is the importance of a supportive home environment. Along with a discussion of the benefits for children, parents, and teachers from both kinds of involvement, suggestions for parent activities are provided. Finally, there is an interpretation of why parent participation is low and how the situation can be changed to benefit future generations. This discussion is an attempt to make society aware of how the relationship between parents and children affects academic achievement.

## Active Parenting in the Home and at School:

### Implications for Children and Adults

Due to an increase in interest, parent involvement has become a current educational topic in our society. In the past it was assumed that teachers were the ones who should have sole responsibility for educating the young individuals in our world. However, research in this area has provided some surprising results. It appears that the role of parents in their children's education is more important than was formerly believed. No longer can family members sit back in their recliners and expect others to be accountable for the success or failure of their offspring.

Parents should accept the idea that teachers are not the sole educators of children. Each day a child spends at home, he is learning about how to respond in the world through interactions with those in the environment. The quality of these encounters can have lasting effects once the child begins his formal education. This does not mean that once a child starts school his parents should neglect to monitor his progress. According to several studies, the opposite appears to be true.

The link between parent involvement, both in the home and at school, and academic achievement is astounding. This connection suggests that perhaps parent involvement has been overlooked for too long. When the National Commission on Excellence in Education met in 1983 parent involvement was identified as a significant goal and target for reform in our nation's school systems (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994).

According to Lareau (1989) parent involvement involves preparing children for education. This includes activities such as talking with and to youngsters, reading to them often, and encouraging them to develop language skills. Lareau also suggests that parents are responsible for attending

school functions such as programs put on by a class, or school carnivals.

The final element in Lareau's definition of parent involvement is fulfilling requests that teachers may make. This may seem like a burden to some parents, but the long-term benefits of such involvement far outweigh the occasional sacrifices.

Another view of parent involvement would be the expectations of school faculty. Morrison (1978) explains that parents should be treated with respect. Teachers should see these important adults as having unique talents and skills that could greatly contribute to classroom learning. According to Morrison "parent involvement is the process of actualizing the potential of parents; of helping parents discover their strengths, potentialities, and talents; and of using them for the benefit of themselves and the family" (p. 22). From this comprehensive definition it is evident that the issue of parents and their involvement can be quite complex. Many viewpoints exist concerning both the strengths and drawbacks to this type of partnership. Opinions on this issue have changed throughout history.

#### Benefits of Parent Participation in Schools for Children

There is evidence that parents were involved in schools as early as the 18th century (Boger, Paolucci, & Richter, 1986). Even before this era John Locke related to the people of the 17th century how vital parent-child interactions were to development (Berger, 1991). Pestalozzi also became well-known for his ideas of parent involvement. He informed mothers that since they were the first people to nourish their children's bodies, then they should also nourish their children's minds. Although parents were seen as important to children and their early environment, it was not until years later that the implications for this involvement were recognized.

It has been established that parent involvement is essential to academic

success. Mothers and fathers can be engaged in their children's learning in a variety of ways, and each of these is important in its own way.

According to Berger (1991), schools need families so students will reach their potential and optimum success. The opinions and attitudes of parents will be reflected in their offspring, so it is imperative that adults regard schools as valuable. Many positive effects have come about as the result of getting parents involved in the education system.

According to Burns (1993) when mothers and fathers had meaningful encounters and participation in classrooms, their children benefitted in several areas. Their academic achievement improved, their attendance was steady, and their motivation to learn was boosted. They also experienced enhanced self-esteem, and demonstrated better behavior in the classroom. Student performance seems directly related to the degree of engagement of the adults in children's lives. In older students it has been observed that the dropout rate for those with active parents has decreased, and their overall performance has improved (Lareau, 1989). According to Dornbusch and Wood (1989) the more comprehensive and longer the parents are involved, the greater the influence on student performance.

In addition to helping learning, parent involvement may also give pupils an opportunity for exposure to a variety of cultures. If students represent a diverse range of cultural backgrounds, interactions with families different than their own may enhance their social and cognitive development (Morrison, 1978). These encounters may also make them think about others rather than themselves. For example, a child from Spain might celebrate Cinco de Mayo. Most children would not know what that is or why it is important. This would be a perfect opportunity for a parent to come in and share a different culture. Knowledge that would normally not be presented in class could be

attained and benefit the whole class (Morrison, 1978).

Educational achievement is also affected by placement. Often, parents are not invited to assist in making a serious decision such as whether or not a child should be retained or promoted. If they were able to give input into this situation, the child could have a greater chance for future academic success. Parents are knowledgeable about their children and can make predictions as to what might be an appropriate approach to teaching a new skill to their children. They may have suggestions that a teacher may not think of alone. They can help guide educators in their approaches to relaying information to their offspring.

With mothers and fathers working cooperatively in the classroom with teachers, stability can be brought to the academic lives of students (Reglin, 1993). This can also counteract instabilities at home. For instance, a child who has a parent that is employed infrequently may feel more security at school when an adult is consistently present and willing to help him. According to Reglin (1993) this ongoing support can lead to improved education and development. Young people will know what is expected of them not only academically, but also in behaviorally.

The link between parent participation and student achievement seems to be greatly swayed by not only the amount of activity, but also how meaningful it is. A study by Gotts and Purnell (1986) suggested that children whose parents were wholeheartedly involved in their education made the largest educational gains. These children also produced reading scores as much as two times higher than those whose parents were not involved in any way. Muller (1993) also made a connection between level of partnership and success of students. Students whose mothers and fathers were associated with activities such as PTO or volunteering, had higher grades than those children

with non-involved guardians.

Another factor that contributes to student achievement is parent participation in at-home, school-initiated activities. These activities are often related to reading and are meant to complement the classroom curriculum (Muller, 1993). Children whose parents engage in these activities improve more in language development. The status of parents also shapes what kind of preparation children receive before entering school, and this in turn affects their later accomplishments.

Still another benefit appears to be the increased abilities of former low achievers. When parents enter a classroom, they can give individual attention to those struggling, and as a result these students seem better able to keep on the same pace as the rest of their classmates (Lareau, 1989). Christenson, Rounds, and Gourney (1993) found that achievement for these students increases because of four factors. The first is the higher quality and greater quantity of instruction. This gives a student more opportunities to fully understand a concept instead of being pushed ahead with the rest of the class. A second reason for improvement is increased motivation. When parents help individual children, they provide educational and personal support. This boosts the children's self-esteem and self-confidence which are reflected in their enhanced academic performance. The third reason for better success is decreased television viewing. Students who enjoy doing work with parents in the classroom often go home and want to do new things with their mothers and fathers. This cuts down on exposure to violence and sexual content found on television and ultimately leads to better grades (Christenson, Rounds, & Gourney, 1993). The final factor for increasing children's school performance is establishing communication within the family. Many times parent volunteers will work with children who have problems

expressing themselves. After spending special time with a volunteer in the classroom, students seem to interact better with those in their families. This makes them feel better about their relationships and makes them want to improve even more (Christenson, Rounds, & Gourney, 1993). These four reasons are very compelling examples of how important parent involvement is in the classroom.

While research shows that parent involvement has major impacts on the academic success of a student, there are also a few troubling results. One aspect that has been observed is that some children become stressed when their parents are in the room with them. They feel as if they are being watched and cannot act like the other children in the class. They have to behave because their parents are at the school (Lareau, 1989). Another drawback associated with mothers and fathers being active in schools is a lack of discipline. Teachers are usually respected by students, but it is sometimes difficult for parent volunteers to get to this level. This is often true when they first enter the room. It takes practice and knowledge to get children under control. Many parents quit volunteering after experiencing an unruly group of children. They feel inadequate and do not want to work toward establishing a rapport with the children they will assist (Morrison, 1978). Another negative side effect for participating parents is a sense of failure if the child fails. Parents often believe that if their children fail then they are to blame. This is especially true for those parents who enter the school and help. They think that just by being in the same building with their children, they will see a higher rate of success and accomplishment. Unfortunately this is not true, but it is difficult to convince adults that children affect their own achievement more than outside influences (Lareau, 1989).



### Benefits of Parent Participation in Schools for Parents

The above-mentioned benefits of parent involvement are encouraging, but students are not the only ones to gain something from active participation. Adults have also been shown to improve several areas of their own lives through partnerships with schools. One area that has shown enhancement is advocacy skills. Parents become more willing to stand up not only to their local school boards, but to state and national legislature as well. One such example was a group that spoke to Congress to save a Follow Through Program in their area. The Follow Through Program provided a variety of community services, and when it was threatened to be cancelled, parents became upset and discussed their views at a session of Congress (Olmsted, 1991). Some of the items they brought up with government officials included the positive changes they had seen in their children, their increased role in their offspring's education as a result of the program, and the more positive relationships they had with the school and its personnel. Probably the most internal changes were the personal accomplishments some of them had been inspired to seek such as going back to get a General Education Degree or enrolling in college courses. They were improving themselves as a result of working with their children and the teachers (Olmsted, 1991).

Parents also liked having a bigger role in making decisions. In some cases they were even asked to assist administrators in selecting new teachers and other staff members. By being included in these kinds of key decisions parents felt empowered and welcomed in schools. Adults also reported a higher awareness of how teaching is involved in all adult-child interactions. Before they were partners in the classrooms, many parents did not consider themselves as educators. but they quickly learned just how key they are to their children's and other children's learning (Olmsted, 1991).

Some guardians also had the opportunity to develop curriculum and implement it not only in the classroom they regularly volunteered in, but the rest of the school as well (Olmsted, 1991). These types of contributions have a definite impact on the self-esteem of any adult. Through participation in the classroom, parents are able to have company, they can interact not only with the children, but the faculty as well. Many adults do not have such chances due to where they live or perceived attitudes about them. Guardians can not only meet new people, but also talk to other people their own age. Mothers sometimes do not have opportunities to speak to anyone but their own children each day. It is healthy to have adult conversations, and school involvement is one way to do this (Morrison, 1978).

Adults build confidence not only in themselves but in their abilities. School involvement can make them feel worthy and like they are contributing something worthwhile to their children. They feel they are supported by other adults, and this gives them courage to try things that previously they would not have thought about doing. For some adults it is enlightening, and they become aware of concerns that teachers may have (Morrison, 1978). One example would be the importance of young people brushing their teeth. Unfortunately, all parents do not realize the repercussions of not having good hygiene. By being in partnership with the school they can gain important knowledge themselves. Yet another positive experience for adults is being praised and respected instead of always being blamed for something going wrong. Mothers and fathers often express joy at being appreciated instead of having all the problems of a household on their shoulders (Morrison, 1978).

Adults who have children in a school are not the only ones to profit from participation. If they are happy with the school, they may go out and tell others in the community. This will build public support for the school

and its functions (Reglin, 1993). When good things are happening, administrators have a way of hearing about it. They can pass this information on to the teachers, which will boost the overall climate of the school (Burns, 1993).

One of the most important benefits of parent involvement is the relationship between parents and their children. Those who are involved in school have seen a marked difference in their skills as guardians. Active mothers and fathers report being more attentive to their children during after-school hours. This seems logical because the offspring now have more in common with their guardians. They have more to discuss when they are at home. Instead of the regular, "How was your day?" parents can ask more detailed and relevant questions. Guardians also attest to having a more positive attitude toward education. They may have begun volunteering in the hopes of changing the education their children were receiving, but end up seeing how vital it is in later life (Morrison, 1978).

#### Benefits of Parent Participation in Schools for Teachers

It is evident that both students and parents profit from parent involvement. However, teachers also benefit from having parent involved in the classroom. With the assistance of parents, a teacher's work load can be reduced. A teacher may ask for help with grading, making materials, or working with small groups of children. This enables the teacher to work with individuals (Morrison, 1978). This leads to improved grades in most instances. Another advantage for teachers is the opportunity to better understand the family structure and background of his students. This helps faculty members get to know the culture and its differences from the American way of life. It also allows for knowledge of the needs, goals, and capabilities that the family and student have (Burns, 1993). This can be

beneficial when planning certain areas of the curriculum. Teachers also enjoy seeing the effects of parent-school partnerships on students. They are able to see the positive outcomes that result when adults share in learning. The most noticeable outcomes teachers can see are improved academic achievement, competency in many areas of study, a better attitude toward achievement, and eventually greater occupational attainment (Berger, 1991).

### Promoting Parent Participation in Schools

Parent involvement is beneficial for children, parents, and teachers. The biggest problem is finding ways to get parents active in school life. There are millions of uninvolved guardians each year with various reasons for lack of participation. To ensure a better education for children, it is time for educators and administrators to face the challenge of noninvolvement immediately. One of the most-mentioned reasons given for mothers and fathers not wanting to help at school is a feeling that they are not welcome. Many parents have schools and administrators who believe they should control education. They make it quite clear that parents are not wanted in the building (Morrison, 1978). By doing this they are limiting the success of the students in the school since research shows what a positive impact parent involvement can make on academic achievement.

Unfortunately administrators are not the sole group who make parents feel uncomfortable. Some teachers also feel that they alone know what is best for children while they attend school; parents are only responsible for what happens at home. These educators feel threatened by mothers and fathers volunteering in the classroom. It is almost as if they are worried the guardians will take over, and they will be seen as inadequate in their profession. According to Morrison (1978) a third reason for lack of involvement is lack of effort on the part of the school. Most parents do

not know how important they can be in the classroom. They may also not have the resources needed to begin a comprehensive and effective parent involvement program in a school. It is the responsibility of the school to help parents get active in the building. Once a program has begun, mothers and fathers will often expand on their own. They can provide some valuable assistance and services, because they love children and want to see their receive a solid education. Parents should be seen as assets rather than nuisances.

Other reasons for mothers and fathers not participating in the education of their children vary. Some of them are personal such as differences of opinion between what the teacher is doing in class and what the parent feels is most appropriate for his child (Morrison, 1978). This is strictly an individual issue and not all people think the same. Time restraints appear to be the biggest barrier in getting parents in the classroom. Some teachers do not believe that parents have time, or they do not want to impose on what little free time they do have (Burns, 1993).

Some parents have had bad memories from their own educational experiences. Mothers and fathers who did not have a positive educational background may pass their negative feelings on to their offspring. Many minority parents have had to deal with discrimination in the past and therefore do not feel comfortable coming in to help in the classroom. They still sense that their children are less-favored over other students. This gives them a sense of powerlessness that is hard to overcome even for a very willing teacher (Reqlin, 1993).

Lareau (1989) found that parents act according to their values. This is especially true for their attitudes toward education. If they do not feel comfortable in a school setting, they will share this impression with their children. Parents' values are reflected in their offspring, so it

is important that teachers and administrators make guardians feel welcome in the school and individual classrooms. Students need to want to be at school before they will be able to achieve at a maximum level.

Reglin (1993) makes several suggestions for getting parents into the building and involving them in the classroom. Some of his suggestions include tutoring, counseling, having a breakfast or lunch, and putting parent contributions in the local paper. One of the most important ideas is to have a "family of the week" display. This lets children get to know each other and points out the uniqueness of each family.

Parents do not just have to be active in the classroom, they may be involved in other school-sponsored activities. Some of the most popular programs offered to parents are aerobics classes, dance lessons, parenting skills classes, support groups, and computer courses. Each of these activities is a way to let mothers and fathers know that schools do not have to be restricted to solely student use. Parents may interact with other adults who are active in the school and discover that they would like to contribute as well (Reglin, 1993).

Although the main focus is to achieve parent participation, it is also wise to view the rest of the family as integral to a child's learning environment. Therefore schools can and should do more to get the entire family unit engaged in the educational system. According to Loucks (1992) communication between home and school is key to success. She suggests ten ways to invite total family participation. Her ideas include having student/parent switch days, fund raising for a joint project such as camping, sending good news cards home, and having a teacher available to talk when grades come out at the end of each grading period.

Berger (1991) further identifies several methods to promote parent

participation in the school building. The first way is treating the parent as an active partner and educational leader. This includes working with the child at home and school. The second way is involving parents in important decisions such as school rules and faculty hiring. Thirdly is inviting parent volunteers in the classroom. Fourth is seeing parents as liasons between what happens in the building and getting children to complete homework in the evenings. Finally, parents should be supporters of the educational goals of the school. If they are not supportive then they will not want to get active and share in their children's education.

#### Active Parenting in the Home

During the 1970s, a man named Ira Gordon came to some profound conclusions about the home and its effects on children's learning. One of his thoughts was that the home was important and a necessity for human development. He also felt that parents needed help in creating an effective home so learning could take place. Finally, he suggested that the early years of life were essential for lifelong knowledge. He is not the only one to make this connection between the first years of life and learning. In early civilizations it was also believed that parents gave their children the skills and values they would need as they grew (Berger, 1991).

According to Boger, Paolucci, & Richter (1986) Bloom thought that the range of development and academic achievement was profoundly affected by the home environment. Most education inside the home is informal and that is the way it should be. Children learn through normal interactions with family members. They develop and learn many basic skills such as eating and talking through modeling in the home (Boger, Paolucci, & Richter, 1986). Morrison (1978) also concluded, that "...the informal education that families provide for their children makes more of an impact on a child's total

educational development than the formal educational system (p.7)." This is a powerful and integral statement. If true, it implies that what children learn before they come to school, and in the evenings, outweighs what teachers will present in classrooms. This puts a great emphasis on parents being involved in their children's development from the moment they are born.

Morrison (1978) also noted that the quickest intellectual growth occurs between birth and age eight. Most of this time is spent in the home, so it is imperative that parents are made aware of what an important role they play in their children's later educational accomplishments. Children are born with a certain capacity for intelligence, but their environments in the early years will mold and determine the extent of the development. A child's beginning foundation will affect his behavior and achievement throughout life. The first teacher a child has helps him see the world, so it is critical that parents provide their offspring with a stimulating environment (Morrison, 1978).

There are many reasons why parents should make the home a place for early education. First, it is a natural and realistic setting. The home is what children are used to, and it is easy to utilize "teachable moments" (Bobbitt & Paolucci, 1986). If something happens and a child wants to know why, it is easy to answer that one individual question at home as opposed to a classroom full of twenty students each having a different question. According to Bobbitt and Paolucci (1986), the homes of children are accessible. There are so many hands-on opportunities available for youngsters. Parents may not realize how important basic materials for life are to learning. According to Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994), exposure to stimulating materials helps children connect home with school. Giving children skills practice will further assist them once they reach school.



Children learn their values, attitudes, and many skills from their parents and other family members. It is key to later development that their first years are full of rich and meaningful experiences. The language that youngsters learn at home is crucial to gaining knowledge. This will ultimately affect how fast and far they will progress in formal educational settings. Learning in the home is not only convenient for parents, but it also makes it easy to meet the needs of each child. Every person born comprehends and takes in information in different ways. The home can account for these unique learning styles and become flexible according to the needs of the boy or girl (Bobbitt & Paolucci, 1986).

According to Bobbitt and Paolucci (1986), emotional development is also affected by the home environment. A child's self-concept, self-esteem, and identity are all shaped by their early interactions with others. Time is an important factor in how children feel. If parents are not spending time with their children, this will make the offspring feel unloved and unimportant. It is crucial that guardians spend time with the youngsters in their homes. However, Bubolz and Griffore (1986) emphasize that all the time a family spends together should not be focused on educational accomplishments. It is just as valuable to spend quality time interacting in a variety of social activities rather than strictly cognitive ones.

Parents may not realize it, but what they feed their children will also affect achievement. Some data displays evidence that lack of nutrition could lead to permanent damage to the brain. This can stunt maturation as well as cognitive functioning. It is vital that parents consider not only their children's intellectual and emotional needs, but their basic physical needs as well. Moral behavior also comes into play in the home setting. The motivation and expectations provided in the home can sway student performance

motivation and expectations provided in the home can sway student performance (Bubolz & Griffore, 1986).

Nurturing and obvious love from parents help children develop a sense of trust. This will be carried to future relationships not only in their personal lives, but also in their academic careers. If children gain an aura of dependability and stability in their lives, this makes it easier for them to interact and cooperate with others. They will have had background experience with difficult situations, and realize that just because they do not agree with someone that does not mean the other person will not still love them and see them as important. If youngsters grow up in a home without learning how to trust, it can affect their interpersonal skills with peers and teachers (Bubolz & Griffore, 1986).

Christenson, Gorney, and Rounds (1992) believe that parent involvement has a profound effect on all areas of a child's development. Their studies found that children who had a lot of verbal interaction, later had higher achievement and better communication skills. They also noted that parents' modeling reading enhanced and stimulated learning in the classroom. The more nurturing and sensitive parents were with their children, the easier it was for them to adjust to their peers. The biggest influences were found in cognitive development. Parents who interacted a great deal with their children, gave them practice in problem-solving, and allowed exploration, saw the greatest achievement in schools.

Bloom came to the conclusion that there are five basic influences on learning. The first key to achievement is contributions made to language development. If children come to school with a solid background in speech and exposure to reading, this can drastically shape those children's accomplishments. The second area is encouragement to learn. Those students

who are often uplifted and praised by their family members seem to feel more confidence in themselves and their abilities. These children do not appear to get discouraged, and they tend to work hard to succeed. The third influence on learning is aspirations for children. If parents do not hope for great things from their children, they will never get them. This is similar to teaching expectations in the classroom. If an educator believes that his students will be low achievers, they will most likely become low achievers. Most young people want to live up to the expectations of adults. If parents want their children to succeed, they must empower them with the necessary tools to do whatever they wish. A fourth factor includes providing help when necessary (Bubolz & Griffore, 1986). This does not mean that every night a parent should sit down and assist a child with his homework. Guardians should ask their children if they need assistance. Then a child can either accept or refuse the offer. Children know that if they need assistance an adult is available for them, but it is vital to let children be independent when they need to be. Mothers and fathers should not force their children to request help, but should be willing to assist if and when the child comes with a problem. The final suggestion that Bloom has is to organize time and space. He suggests that guardians should set up a special place for children to go to study or just relax. They should also respect the amount of time a student will spend on assignments. Children should not be restricted to only doing homework during certain hours. Flexibility is key to having a healthy home learning environment (Bubolz & Griffore, 1986).

According to Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) children need not only external support, but inner resources as well. The first item necessary for school success is the idea that individuals act intentionally. This means that students should understand that outcomes in their lives are

connected to their behavior. The second key issue is being able to see one's self as being competent in skills that are integral to success. This may include such things as being able to communicate clearly, expressing a dedication to learning, or having confidence in your abilities. The final element needed for academic accomplishment is knowing that behavior must be autonomous or choiceful. This suggests that children can self-regulate themselves to do things that are more conducive to learning. For instance they could register for an afterschool tutoring program instead of sitting in front of the television for hours. Another option would be going to the library to check out books that interest them instead of playing video games. If children possess these three "inner resources" they will be more apt to succeed in school (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994).

Parents should strive to assist their children in grasping these ideas.

Parenting style may also be related to progress and accomplishment in an academic setting. According to Muller (1993) authoritative parents have children with higher grades. Her claim is based on a 1987 study conducted by Dornbusch, Leidermann, Roberts and Fraleigh. Authoritative parents provide structure and discipline, while at the same time maintaining open communication with their children. Youngsters who have had such a background at home are usually more willing to express concerns and problems with their teachers, as compared to those who have had parents with other parenting styles. These students also seem more self-reliant and independent. This may be due to the way their parents and siblings interacted with them at home. Those with authoritarian parents seem more withdrawn and discontent in class (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989).

Additional indicators of student success are (a) talking about current happenings at school, (b) enrolling in extra activities after school, and

(c) integrating education into everyday life. When parents talk to their children about what they are doing at school, this sends a message that they are important. This often makes youngsters want to succeed so they can make their families proud. Music seems to be a very important after school activity. It can assist a student in improving several skills such as practice, drill, self-discipline, and performance. All of these techniques can be beneficial to students in school and later in life. Integrating education into each day also signals to a child that being knowledgeable is important and something that is valued in his or her household (Muller, 1993).

Amount of television watched during the week also impacts academic achievement. Those children who have limited opportunity to watch television usually devote more time to their homework and studying. Therefore, it is wise for parents to consider how much time their offspring are spending viewing programs (Muller, 1993). Christenson, Rounds, and Gorney (1992) believe that parents should not only limit their children's television viewing hours, but also give them feedback and reinforcement when they complete their homework each evening. This gives children a sense of accomplishment and will help motivate them to continue doing their assignments.

Children often need encouragement to keep going through the school year. According to Dornbusch and Wood (1989), extrinsic rewards and punishment actually decrease motivation for children. Rewards include tangible items such as stickers, candy bars, and money. Punishment does not help children because many times they would not understand why they are in trouble. This is true especially when they get scolded at home for something they did six hours earlier at school. They do not know what they did wrong and feel hopeless in trying to improve the situation.

Another consideration in predicting a student's academic success is after school supervision. Those boys and girls who go home alone often waste time eating unhealthy snacks and watching uneducational television programs. Contrary to these young people, are those who either go home to an adult or go to another location that is supervised, such as a neighbor's house. Boys and girls with supervision usually do not have a choice in what they do. Their parents or another adult may tell them they have to do their homework before they go outside and play with a friend. The guardians are putting an emphasis on education by making sure the children complete their work. Finally, academics seem affected by the friendship networks of adults. When parents talk and interact they can often help each other and their children. If a child is having problems with a certain subject he may be able to get help from another child through contacts that his parents have. It also makes it easier to reinforce common values. Children will respond better to expectations such as doing their work before playing if they know their friends are experiencing the same thing (Muller, 1993).

### Summary

The positive effects of having parents in schools and interacting with their children at home are vital. The few negative effects are far outweighed by the many beneficial aspects. According to Black (1993) the United States Department of Education stated in 1986 that what parents do to help is more necessary than how much wealth they have. It is imperative that teachers and administrators look past the financial status of families and look to the talents that could be gained by having family members in school buildings. Burns (1993) found that no matter what the educational attainment of parents, they can and do make influential contributions to the achievement of students. If they receive training and encouragement they can do anything they want

and feel better about themselves and their relationships with their offspring. Faculty and staff need to be supportive and accepting of additional resources and assistance from the community. The school is not a place reserved for children. It should reflect the values and lifestyle of the surrounding area.

Interaction between a child's parents, school, and the child himself are all key elements in promoting academic success. Children need to have a positive experience and it all begins with the home environment. Teachers should be willing to help parents in creating a warm and nurturing home. The effects will be an improved self-esteem and motivation to achieve. The connection between home and school have been proven to affect the overall accomplishments of students. By working together, children, parents, and teachers can benefit through open communication and cooperation. The following poem depicts the interdependence between the home and school:

#### Unity

I dreamed I stood in a studio  
And watched two sculptors there.  
The clay they used was a young child's mind  
And they fashioned it with care.  
One was a teacher-the tools he used  
Were books, music, and art.  
The other, a parent, worked with a guiding hand,  
And a gentle heart.  
Day after day, the teacher toiled with touch  
That was deft and sure,  
While the parent labored by his side  
And polished and smoothed it o'er.  
And when at last, their task was done  
They were proud of what they had wrought,  
For the things they had molded into the child  
Could neither be sold nor bought.  
And each agreed they would have failed  
If each had worked alone.  
For behind the teacher stood the school  
And behind the parent, the home.  
Burns (1993, p. 88)

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